

A personal invitation to join the CROWD*...

***Committee Requesting an Ozawindib Watershed District**

INFORMATIONAL MEETING

**Headwaters Science Center
7:00 PM Thursday 31 January 2008**

What is a watershed district?

Why should we establish a local watershed district?

What are the boundaries of the proposed Ozawindib Watershed District?

What's with the proposed name?

How is a watershed district established and governed?

When will the Ozawindib Watershed District be formally started?

Who is seeking to establish an Ozawindib Watershed District?

Will establishing a watershed district increase my property taxes?

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**Help us establish an
“Ozawindib Watershed District”
for the Mississippi – Schoolcraft – Turtle Catchment Area**

What is a watershed district? (see also <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/relatedlinks/watersheddistricts.html>)

Watershed districts are local units of government authorized by state statute 103D in 1955. All watershed districts share a common purpose of preventing and solving water related problems but each does so in a manner responsive to specific local needs and contexts. Historically, most watershed districts were established in agricultural areas but they are becoming increasingly common in other parts of the state as well. There are currently 46 watershed districts in Minnesota ranging in size from 43 (Carnelian-Marine) to 5990 (Red Lake) square miles. Watershed districts collaborate in water planning and management with the state, counties, cities and soil and water conservation districts. In short, a watershed district provides a locally coordinated means to maintaining and enhancing water resources.

Why should we establish a local watershed district?

Water does not respect political boundaries. In contrast, watersheds are natural landscape units: all precipitation falling within a watershed exits through a single common "pour point." Consequently, it makes sense to manage water resources on a watershed basis. This type of management allows for an overall, holistic approach that is effective and consistent. Our proposed watershed district encompasses lands in the following six counties Beltrami (57.7%), Hubbard (23.8%), Clearwater (13.6%) and Cass (4.1%) with tiny fractions in Itasca and Becker. Currently, water protection activities in our area are distributed in a rather *ad hoc* fashion among various counties and federal, state, and local agencies. In addition, funding for water protection activities at a local level is limited and highly variable from year to year. Watershed districts have the authority to levy a small tax that assures a stable base of funding for water protection activities (see below).

Where are the boundaries of the proposed Ozawindib Watershed District (and what's with the name)?

The proposed watershed district includes all lands draining into the Mississippi River above Knutson Dam (at the outlet of Cass Lake). We further propose to divide that area into five sub-districts (Mississippi Headwaters, Schoolcraft River, Turtle River, Irving-Bemidji Basin, Cass Chain Basin). As for the proposed name, Ozawindib was the Anishinabe leader who guided Henry Schoolcraft to Lake Itasca in 1832. Because Ozawindib was intimately familiar with the Schoolcraft and Turtle Rivers as well, it seems an appropriate way to acknowledge regional history and our complex cultural legacy.

How is a watershed district established and governed?

A petition to establish a watershed district can be initiated by citizens, local units of government, or a variety of other entities. Once the validity of the petition is established by auditors of counties which include lands, the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) schedules and convenes a public hearing. Following the public hearing, BWSR establishes the District by order if it is deemed to advance public interest and the purposes of the watershed district law. Watershed Districts are governed by a Board of Managers. The initial Board is appointed by BWSR from a list of candidate provided by the petitioners. At the staggered ends of each initial term, managers are appointed by counties. Managers typically hire a Director for day-to-day operations.

When will the Ozawindib Watershed District be formally started?

We hope to have the District established by January 2009.

Who is seeking to establish an Ozawindib Watershed District?

The Committee Requesting an Ozawindib Watershed District (CROWD) is a non-partisan group of citizen from across the watershed united by a common interest in conserving, restoring, and enhancing regional water resources.

Will establishing a watershed district increase my property taxes?

Yes. However, unlike most property taxes, revenues collected by a watershed district are used exclusively for a single purpose -- to protect and enhance the quality and supply of local water resources. Because state statute sets a cap of \$250,000 on the operating levy for a watershed district, property owners within the watershed would see annual cost of about \$1 for every \$10,000 of assessed market value. Because many of the highest value local properties include lake and river frontage, this tax would yield a proportionately significant benefit to owners of most expensive real estate.